

Merchant and Nuuanu Streets --
Bishop Estate Building
77 Merchant Street
Honolulu
Honolulu County
Hawaii

HABS No. HI-55 H

HABS
HI,
2-HONLU,
18-H-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013

HABS
HI,
2-HONOLU,
18-H-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MERCHANT AND NUANU STREETS COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS
BISHOP ESTATE BUILDING

HABS No. HI-55 H

Location: 77 Merchant Street, City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii.
Zone 2, Sec. 1, Plat 02, Tax Key #19.

Present Owner
and Occupant: Harriet Bouslog, law offices.

Significance: The Bishop Estate Building was a direct result of the enormous growth of the holdings of the estates of Charles and Bernice Bishop. The trustees of the estates had need for headquarters and hired a prominent local architect's office for its design.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1896. The Bishop Estate Building was built in 1896. [Thomas Thrum's Annual, 1897, p. 127 and Pacific Commercial Advertiser, 1-2-1879, p.1.]
2. Architect: The office of Clinton Briggs Ripley received the commission for the building. Charles William Dickey worked in Ripley's office at that time and is popularly credited with the design. Dickey went on to start his own architectural practice and became a great success in Hawaii. Born in California, his family moved to Haiku, Maui, when he was only two, and it was there that Dickey was reared. He returned to the Mainland for his schooling, receiving his architectural training at M.I.T. with a B.A. in 1894. He worked for two architectural firms on the Mainland before returning to Hawaii and the office of Clinton Briggs Ripley. In 1900 he left Ripley to form a partnership with Edgar Newcomb. Though he felt the need for the development of a "Hawaiian" style of architecture, Dickey's early work "followed the dictates of 19th century American architectural idioms." [The Architecture of C. W. Dickey.] In 1904 he moved to Oakland, California, where he stayed and practiced for twenty years before returning to Hawaii. When he opened a branch office in Honolulu again in 1920, Hawaii was more willing to listen to his thoughts on the development of a Hawaiian style of architecture. He moved back to the islands in 1925 and gradually developed a kind of trademark common to his later work: the "Dickey" or "Hawaiian" roof: a double-pitched hipped roof, with a wide, projecting eave added at a more shallow angle from the main body of a high roof. [Wilcox and Architecture of C. W. Dickey.]

3. Original and subsequent owners:

1896 The Bishop Museum held the deed to the Bishop Estate Building.
1979 sold to Ted James
1980 sold to Harriet Bouslog
[Tax Records and Historic Hawaii News, 5-1979.]

4. Suppliers: The lava stone for the facade was from the Kamehameha quarries. [Pacific Commercial Advertiser, 1-2-1897, p.1.]

5. Original plans and construction: The richly ornamented lava stone facade remains virtually unchanged since construction. The ground floor apparently had one large open space and a 16' ceiling height. The Bishop Estate Building was constructed adjacent to the bank of Bishop & Co. to which it was linked internally.

6. Alterations and additions: Minor alterations to the interior space occurred in 1956. [Building permit 2-1-02-19, #123209.]

B. Historical Context:

When Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop died in 1884, she left behind an estate which included 378,500 acres of land and was valued at \$300,000. The bulk of this estate was to be used to found the Kamehameha Schools, to which end she designated trustees. With the Princess' bequest and Mr. Bishop's own gifts from his personal investments, the estate's highest acreage was 440,184 shortly after its institution. However, much of that land was unusable (being mountainous, lava, or wastelands) and the actual annual income from the Estate was only \$30,683 and cash on hand about \$18,000. However, she instructed in her will that her Trustees were not to sell any of the land unless necessary for the construction of new school buildings and then only when it was for the best interest of her estate. Obviously, the Trustees conducted themselves well, for in 1900 the annual income of the Estate was \$109,500. [Black & Mellen.]

In the 1840s, the site of the Bishop Estate Building was part of the property of William French, one of the first white men who traded with Kamehameha I. At that time large trading rooms occupied the site. The property was sold to James Austin, who sold it in 1882 to James Campbell, who owned the adjacent land, Diamond-Head direction. From 1876 to 1896, the site was occupied by a one-story gable-roofed building, which was the drug store of Dr. Edward Hoffmann since he had sold his corner site to Charles Bishop. This one-story structure was demolished for the two-story lava Bishop Estate Building, which cost \$15,000 to construct. [Pacific Commercial Advertiser, 1-2-1897, p.1, and Emily Zants, "Bishop Buildings," Historic Hawaii News May 1979, p.5.]

In 1918 the Bishop Estate built for its offices a stone and concrete office building on Kaahumanu Street, next to the Melcher's Building [See HABS NO. HI-34], and vacated the Merchant Street property which continued to function as office space. [Thrum's Annual, 1919.] The later Bishop Estate building no longer exists.

As of 1982 the Estate's holdings were estimated at \$1.9 billion and included nine percent of the total land area of the State of Hawaii.

Report prepared by Laura S. Alderman, Project Historian.

For background information on this downtown neighborhood, see HABS No. HI-55.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Bishop Estate Building is a robust, heavily-rusticated stone building in the Richardsonian Romanesque tradition. The symmetrical facade has excellent proportions and detailing. It is the only building of this style and material in the Merchant Street National Register district.
2. Condition: The building appears to be structurally sound but needs maintenance and repairs of some of its more vulnerable materials.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 29'-7" x 39'-2" (NW) & 43'-8" (SE) by 42'-6" (two stories) high. Only the narrow facade is visible, as the building is contiguous to its neighbors.
2. Foundations: Not visible for inspection.
3. Walls: Street facade of heavily rusticated coursed volcanic stone. Exposed stone lintels, voussoir arches and relieving arch, and checkerboard stone pattern enrich the wall surface. Four engaged turret forms carried on smooth round corbels divide the facade into three bays, the middle bay larger than those at the sides. The upper portion of the facade has a checkerboard pattern of square stones. The rear wall has a stucco finish, its materials of construction not visible for inspection. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps indicate the building's material of construction as brick with a stone facade.

4. Structural system, framing: Brick bearing walls with joists.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Entrance doors occupy the two side bays. As this building is internally linked with its neighbor, access is achieved from the other building. The doorway to the right has one step up; that to the left has two steps. Over each doorway is an arched voussoir transom separated from the doorway by a stone lintel. The doorway to the right has paired doors, each leaf of which has a vertical glass panel and small molded panels (one over the glass, two below.) To highlight the building's symmetry, the left doorway appears to be the same as that on the right. However it is a single leaf door articulated to resemble a double door.
- b. Windows and shutters: The center of the ground level contains a composition of a triple window under a divided lunette which spans all three openings. The windows are separated by stone mullions; stone lintels separate them from the divided voussoir arched lunette above. The windows have wood frames and one-over-one-light double-hung sash. The windows in the arched portions have been painted over.

Second floor: The center bay contains a pair of windows while the side bays each contain one. Upper sashes are adjusted to accommodate the shouldered arch openings. Windows have wooden one-over-one-light double-hung sash.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: A flat roof with composite roofing surface slopes to the rear. There is a hip-roofed skylight/vent just rear of center of the building. It measures 6'-1" x 17'-9" and stands 5'-7" high.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The front parapet is 3'-7" high with the pediment form rising 7'-5" above the roof level. The parapet has a smooth capstone and unarticulated brackets. The engaged turret forms continue above the parapet. Those at the center continue as cylinders and have circular and half sphere capstones. The end ones terminate in low conical capstones.

C. Description of Interior:

While some changes have been made to the interiors, much of the original fabric remains. There is no basement. This building is connected to the Bishop Bank building through openings in their common wall.

1. Floor plans: The first floor has new partitions. Apparently it was originally a single space or a major space with small areas to the rear. The ceiling height measures 16'. The second floor, which appears mostly intact, has a central lightwell with a row of offices to the front and another to the rear of the building. Its ceiling height measures 12'6".
2. Stairways: The original wood stairway is intact. It is a quarter-turn stair to the right with twenty risers (7" risers, 12" treads) to the landing and ten to the second floor. There is a milled wood wainscot.
3. Flooring: Asphalt tile over wood floors.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Original partitions on second floor of wood lath and plaster; plaster ceilings.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Second floor: Several original doors are in situ. They have a glass panel above two wood panels. Original milled wood trim is present.
 - b. Windows: The large wood one-over-one-light double-hung sash between the offices and lightwell also have original trim. The lightwell is lit by a hip-roofed skylight.
6. Decorative features and trim: Milled wood trim throughout most of the building. The original vault is located to the south rear corner of the first floor.
7. Hardware: Original cast hardware.
8. Mechanical equipment: All replacement equipment.

D. Site:

The building is situated in mid-block on the makai side of Merchant street in the Merchant Street National Register Historic District. It sits contiguous to the Bishop Bank building to the right (ewa) and to a new construction to the left (Diamond Head.) A cast-iron pilaster fragment from the Campbell Block, which was demolished in 1965, remains on the Diamond Head side.

This building occupies the entire site. The site has no landscaping or outbuildings. To the rear (makai) is a three-level public parking structure, separated from the Bishop Estate building by an open, unmaintained areaway.

In this description, local designation is given for orientation. "Mauka" means mountain irection, "Makai" means sea direction, "Diamond Head" means in the direction of Diamond Head crater, "Ewa" means in the direction of the town of Ewa (opposite Diamond Head direction).

Report prepared by Robert C. Giebner, Project Supervisor.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views:

From the Bishop Museum Photograph Collection:

Files: "Geography. Oahu. Honolulu Streets. Merchant S. pre-1900", "Geography. Oahu. Honolulu Streets. Merchant S. 1900-".

Album 12, Page 30, "C.B. Mus. 104, Gartley 196. Merchant Street, Honolulu, c. 1890?"

B. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Hawaii Directories, 1896- present. Hawaii State Archives and Bishop Museum Library.

Maps: Lion Fire Insurance Company, 1879. Bishop Museum Map Collection.

B. F. Dillingham Fire Insurance Company for Board of Fire Underwriters of Honolulu, 1900, and 1906 corrected to 1911. Bishop Museum Map Collection and Hawaii State Archives.

Sanborn Map Company, 1914 uncorrected (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.), 1914 corrected to 1925, 1927 uncorrected, and 1927 corrected to 1951. Bishop Museum Map Collection and Hawaii State Archives.

Tax Records, Tax Assessor's office, 842 Bethel Street, Honolulu, Hawaii. Records for "Zone 2, Sec. 1, Plat 02, #19."

Building Permit, Municipal Building, Honolulu, Hawaii, #123209.

Hawaii State Archives "Historic Buildings Task Force" File #TMK 2-1-02-19. University of Hawaii architecture student's 1967 report on Bishop Estate Building.

C. Secondary and Published Sources:

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Fashioned Block." Hawaiian Journal of History 6(1972): 3-27.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was jointly sponsored by First American Title Co., Historic
Hawaii Foundation, and the National Park Service. Recorded under the
direction of Kenneth L. Anderson, Chief of HABS, and Alison K. Hoagland, HABS
Historian, the project was completed during the summer of 1987 at the Honolulu
field office. Project supervisor was Robert C. Giebner (University of
Arizona); project historian was Laura S. Alderman (Washington, D.C.);
architectural foreman was J. Scott Anderson (Washington, D.C.); and
architectural technicians Coy E. Burney (University of Maryland), Kenneth R.
Imoehl (University of Arizona), and Michel A. van Ackere (Brown University).